

JASON AND THE *Golden Fleece*



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Director : Boutje Fedankt
Manager : Boutje Fedankt
Editor : Boutje Fedankt



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JASON AND THE Golden Fleece



ONCE upon a time, in Ancient Greece, many years ago, there reigned a King whose name was Pelias. He was not the rightful King, for he had taken the throne from his stepbrother and had driven him and his small son Jason away.

Jason was a golden-haired boy, strong and healthy. One day his father sent him off to a strange school to learn about life and growing-up. Jason's schoolteacher was the oddest person you could ever see. He was a Centaur, and he had the body and legs of a white horse, with the head and shoulders of a man.

His name was Chiron; and, in spite of his odd appearance he was an excellent teacher. He taught Jason and the other pupils many things, such as how to play upon a harp, how to cure diseases and how to use a sword and shield.

Jason and the boys liked the "battle" lessons best of all. Watched by Chiron, they pretended to fight each other with blunt-edged swords, dodging and darting around, breathless with excitement.

And all the time Chiron watched and cheered them on. "Well done, Jason," he would shout. "If it had been a true fight, you would have won easily."

The boys rested for a few minutes and then they were off again, running races with each other over miles and miles of rocky countryside. Chiron

thundered along beside them, his clattering hoofs ringing on the stones.

"Faster, Jason, faster!" he called out. And when Jason put all his strength into a sudden spurt, Chiron ran even faster and passed him with the speed of a racehorse.

"It's not fair, good Chiron," Jason panted. "You have four legs and I have only two."

"Never mind, Jason," Chiron laughed. "All the time, your legs will be getting stronger and stronger and you will be able to use them to good purpose when you have grown into a man."

"What special purpose did you have in mind, Chiron?" Jason asked.

The Centaur took Jason back to the cave where they lived and spoke seriously to him. "You are a prince royal, Jason," he said. "Your father is the rightful King and should be upon the throne where Pelias now sits."

"I know—I have secretly thought about that many times," replied Jason. "My dear father was wronged by Pelias and I am only waiting until I am old enough and strong enough to take the throne from him. There is a story that there is a Golden Fleece that hangs upon a tree in a sacred grove. If I could obtain it, then King Pelias would have to give up his throne."

"The Fleece of the Golden Ram can be found there in the sacred grove," Chiron agreed. "It belonged to a great ram, who rescued two children who were in danger of their lives, and fled with them over land and sea to a place called Colchis. One of the children fell into the sea and was drowned. But the other, a little boy named Phrixus, was brought ashore by the faithful ram, which was so exhausted, however, that it lay down and died. In memory of this good deed, the fleece of the poor dead ram was changed by magic into pure gold. Now it hangs upon the tree in the sacred grove, but whoever gets to it will have to face many terrible dangers. It will be a very brave man who can find the Golden Fleece!"

"Then I shall be that man," Jason said.

A few years later, he set out in search of the Golden Fleece. He took a spear in each hand and threw a leopard skin over his shoulders to keep off the rain. The part of his dress on which he most prided himself was a pair of sandals that had once been his father's. They were tied upon his feet with strings of gold.

As he passed along through villages and towns, women and children ran to their doors and windows, wondering where this handsome youth was going, with his leopard skin and golden-tied sandals, and what heroic deeds he meant

to perform, with a spear in his right hand and another in his left.

Jason travelled far, never stopping for long—until he came to a great river that was in full flood. It rushed right across his pathway and it thundered so loudly and looked so wild and dangerous that Jason halted on its bank. There was no bridge—the mighty torrent had washed it away. Sharp and jagged rocks stood up out of the foaming water. Great tree trunks, uprooted by the floods, came tumbling along on the current, to be caught by the sharp rocks and smashed to pieces.

To cross such a river seemed impossible. Jason stood with stinging spray splashing in his face. How could he do it? How could he cross?

Next week, in this lovely story, you will find out how Jason DID cross that river.

Hello, boys and girls! I am sure you are going to like the exciting story of Jason and the Golden Fleece, which has started on these two pages this week. You will be able to read more of Jason's wonderful adventures in "ONCE UPON A TIME" next week, and there will also be a lovely new colour-picture story for you, called "The Sleeping Princess". Thank you for all the nice letters you have written to me. I always enjoy getting them and know that you are liking "ONCE UPON A TIME" so much. So keep on writing when you have time.

Goodbye now, from your friend,

The Editor.





JASON AND THE Golden Fleece

JASON stood beside the flooded, rushing river, wondering how he could cross it, when a voice spoke from behind him.

"See the poor lad," said the voice. "He must have had a poor education, since he does not know how to cross a little stream like this. Or is he afraid of wetting his fine golden-stringed sandals?"

Greatly surprised, Jason looked round. He saw an old woman, with a ragged shawl over her head, and wearing a thick cloak that was made of nothing better than old sacking.

"Where are you going, Jason?" she asked.

While Jason was gazing at her, a peacock strutted forward and took his stand at the old woman's side.

"I am going to the wicked King Pelias, to bid him come down from my father's throne and let me reign instead," replied Jason. "If he will not do so, then I will search and find the Golden Fleece, and then he will have to obey me."

"Well, then, just take me on your back, good youth, and carry me across the

river," said the old woman. "I and my peacock need to reach the other side."

"I would gladly help you if I could, good mother, but I doubt whether I am strong enough to carry you across," said Jason.

"Then neither are you strong enough to find the Golden Fleece and pull King Pelias off his throne," said she, with great scorn. "Unless you help an old woman in her need you ought not to be a King. Either take me on your back or I shall try my best to struggle over."

Jason felt that he could never forgive himself if the poor, feeble old woman should come to any harm in trying to cross the rushing river.

"Very well," he agreed. "But if the river sweeps me away it will carry you away, too."

"Never fear, we shall get safely across," said the old woman. She threw her arms round Jason's neck, and he stepped boldly into the roaring current. As for the peacock, it alighted on the old lady's shoulder. Jason's two spears, one in each hand, kept him from stumbling as he felt

his way among the hidden rocks. When he was halfway across, his foot was caught in a hole between two rocks and stuck there so fast that, when he pulled it free, he lost one of his golden-stringed sandals.

"I have lost a sandal among the rocks," said Jason, feeling annoyed about it. "What will they say at the court of King Pelias if I arrive with a golden-stringed sandal on one foot and the other foot bare?"

"Do not take it to heart," replied the old woman. "Losing that sandal is a lucky thing for you. It tells me that you are the very person the Speaking Oak has been talking about."

There was no time to ask more about the Speaking Oak, for Jason was busy struggling through the last few yards of the rushing river. He at last got to the other bank and set down the old woman, and her peacock, safely on the grass.

"You will get a better pair of sandals by and by," she said. "And when King Pelias sees your bare foot you will see him turn pale with fright."

With those words she hobbled away and Jason set forward on his journey to the city where King Pelias reigned.

When he got there, he saw a great crowd of people, all in their best clothes, and excited about something.

"This is the Kingdom of Pelias," one man told Jason. "He has called us together to watch him perform a ceremony of worship to the God Neptune. Yonder is the King, beside the altar."

When the man was speaking he looked curiously at Jason's feet.

"Look at him!" he whispered to the man next to him. "Do you see? He wears only one sandal!"

Others began to stare at Jason. "One sandal! One sandal!" they kept saying. "The man with one sandal—he has come at last. What will King Pelias say?"

Poor Jason was a little upset about this, thinking the people rather rude to point out that he had only one sandal, but he strode forward to the smoking altar, where King Pelias stood with a ceremonial sword in his hand.

"Who are you?" cried the King with a terrible frown. Then he glanced down at Jason's bare foot and, as the old woman had promised, he turned quite pale.

"The one-sandaled man has come!" he muttered to himself.

Many years before, King Pelias had been told by the Speaking Oak that a man with only one sandal would come and take the throne from him. On this account he had given strict orders that nobody should come into his presence wearing only one sandal. He had even ordered that when

his people's sandals wore out they were to be given a new pair free. And now, seeing Jason, he was in a fright—but he tried not to show it.

"My good young man," he said in a soft voice, "you are very welcome. What may I call you?"

"My name is Jason," answered the young stranger. "Since I was a small boy I have dwelt in the cave of Chiron the Centaur."

"I have heard of Chiron the schoolmaster," said the King. "It gives me great delight to see one of his scholars at my court."

King Pelias meant cunningly to trap the young man. So with a crafty smile on his face he went on, "What would you do, brave Jason, if you hated a man and wished to get rid of him?" he asked.

Jason saw the look in the eyes of King Pelias and guessed that the King knew what he had come for, but he spoke up boldly.

"I would send such a man in quest of the Golden Fleece!"

There was hardly a hope that any man would live for long if he went in search of the Golden Fleece, for it was a terrible task, full of dangers. The eyes of King Pelias sparkled with joy when he heard Jason's answer.

"Well said, wise young man with one sandal!" he said. "Go, then, and at the peril of your life, search for and bring me back the Golden Fleece."

"I will go," replied Jason. "And if I return with it, King Pelias, you must hand over your crown and throne to me!"

Next week: Jason prepares to make his dangerous journey.

Here are the questions about the story on page 10. Try to answer the questions and then re-read the story to see if you have answered them correctly.

1. What was the animal that the Indians hunted, for food and clothing?
2. What did the Indians make out of the animals' hooves?
3. Can you name one or more of the great Indian leaders?
4. How do you know that the Indian in the picture is a great warrior?

Dear Boys and Girls—I can just squeeze a few words in to thank you for all the lovely letters you are writing to me. Many come from happy readers, who have been enjoying "Once Upon A Time" from the very first number. Some come from new readers, and I give them a very warm welcome. Have you any friends who have not seen a "Once Upon A Time"? If so, please show them this one.

Your friend,
THE EDITOR.



A detailed illustration of a young man, Jason, standing in a forest. He is wearing a brown tunic with a white skirt and a brown helmet. He holds a long spear in his right hand and a round shield in his left. He is looking up at a massive, ancient tree trunk that dominates the left side of the frame. The tree has thick, gnarled bark and large roots spreading out at its base. The background shows more trees and a bright sky.

JASON ^{AND THE} *Golden Fleece*

WHEN Jason was a small boy, wicked Pelias had stolen the throne of Iolchos, in Ancient Greece. He had stolen it from Jason's father and had made himself King in his place. For years he had ruled the land undisturbed—but one day a strong and handsome young man, wearing only one golden-tied sandal, arrived at the court of King Pelias. The stranger was Jason, now grown-up and ready to take back the throne which King Pelias had stolen from his father. But first he had to do one thing—the most dangerous task in the whole world. That task was to seek and find the Golden Fleece, which hung upon a tree-branch in the Sacred Wood, many hundreds of miles away.

King Pelias felt no fear that he would lose his throne. Other brave men had gone in search of the Golden Fleece and none had come back alive. As Jason left the Palace, King Pelias gave a sigh of relief at the thought that he would never see the golden-haired stranger again.

As for Jason, he felt no fear either. The first thing he did when he left the presence of the hated King Pelias was to go to a place called Dodona, to speak to the Talking Oak and ask its advice on what he should do.

Many hundreds of years old, the giant Talking Oak stood in the centre of an ancient wood. Nobody had seen a taller tree. Its trunk rose up and up out of the ground and its upper branches seemed almost to touch the clouds. Its leaves cast a great shadow the size of several fields.

Jason felt very small as he stood in the shadow of it and looked up amongst the twisted branches and green leaves.

"What shall I do, O mighty Talking Oak?" he asked, speaking in a loud voice, as if addressing a person hidden somewhere in the heart of the huge tree-trunk. "What shall I do in order to win the Golden Fleece?"

When Jason spoke, all went quiet. The leaves of the Talking Oak and the leaves of all the other trees in the wood stopped their rustling. After a few moments, the leaves of the Talking Oak began to stir and move, as though a strong wind was blowing through them. The sound grew louder. It became more than just the noise of leaves murmuring in the whistling wind.

Jason strained his ears to listen. He began to pick out words, but they were all jumbled-up because it seemed that every leaf of the oak tree was trying to answer him. The noise grew to a chattering din and Jason felt that he would never understand, until a deep, loud voice came from within the heart of the Talking Oak itself and silenced the whispering of the leaves.

"Go to Argus, the ship-builder, and ask him to build you a great ship with fifty oars!" said the booming voice.

The voice said no more. The leaves started to murmur among themselves again.

Jason walked away, out of the shadow of the mighty Talking Oak and into the sunlight. He had never heard of Argus, but was delighted when he returned to Iolchos and was told that there really was a man of that name in the city—and a very skilful boat-builder by trade.

"Good friend Argus," said Jason, when he hurried to the river's edge and found the ship-builder, "will you build me a strong vessel with fifty oars, that can face all the dangers of the sea? I intend to make a journey to find the Golden Fleece."

"No man has yet made such a terrible journey," replied Argus. "And no man has ever built a ship so large that it would need fifty strong men to row it—but the first is your task, the second shall be mine."

So the builder, the carpenters and the joiners began their work and for a good while afterwards were making a great clatter with their saws and hammers, until the new ship, which was called the Argo, seemed to be ready for sea. And, as the Talking Oak had already given him such good advice, Jason had the idea to go and see what else it might have to say.

Standing at the foot of the huge trunk, Jason asked what he should do next. At this, a strong branch just above his head started to shake and quiver.

"Cut me off!" said the branch. "Cut me off and carve me into a figurehead for your new ship."

Jason did as he was asked and lopped off

the tree-branch and took it to a wood-carver to be made into a figurehead. He was not a very clever man at all, but as soon as the oak-branch was given to him, his hands seemed to act as if by magic. When the work was finished it was easily the most wonderful work he had ever done—the figure of a beautiful woman with a helmet on her head and long ringlets of hair. On the left arm was a shield, and the right arm was stretching out, pointing forward.

In all it was a proud statue, and Jason was delighted with it. He could hardly wait for the carver to set it into place—the only place where a proud figurehead should be, on the prow of a lovely ship.

"And now," said Jason, looking up at it, "I must go again to the Talking Oak and ask what next to do."

"There is no need to do that, Jason," said a voice, which reminded him very much of the voice of the mighty oak tree in the Sacred Wood. "When you need good advice, you have only to ask me."

Jason was looking straight into the figurehead's face when these words were spoken, but he could hardly believe either his ears or his eyes. The lips, though carved out of oak, had moved and the voice had come from its mouth.

"But that is not really a thing to be wondered at," thought Jason, after his first moment of surprise. "That beautiful face was carved from the wood of the giant Talking Oak, so it is most natural, I suppose, that it can speak. Indeed, it would have been very odd if it had not."

He felt suddenly happy. It was a great piece of good luck that he should be able to carry such a wise talking figurehead with him on

his perilous voyage in search of the Golden Fleece.

"Could any advice be better than that of my own ship's figurehead, as it travels the many seas with me?" said Jason. "I am indeed the luckiest man in all Greece, if not in the whole world."

He smiled up at the wooden face.

"Tell me, wonderful figurehead," he said. "Where shall I find fifty brave young men, who will each take an oar and drive my ship through the stormy seas? You who are the true daughter of the Talking Oak of Dodona, will you tell me that? They must have strong arms to row and gallant hearts to face all dangers, or we shall never win the Golden Fleece."

The lips of the wooden figurehead moved to give Jason a quick answer.

"Go and call the heroes of Greece," she replied. "They will make up the crew you need for the Argo's journey."

Next week: Jason collects his crew.

Here are the questions about the story on page 9. When you have tried to answer them, you can re-read the story to see how well you remembered it.

1. What colour is the little girl's dress?
2. What is the name of the instrument her father is playing?
3. A King is believed to have invented the violin. Of which country was he King?
4. In what country was the violin, as we know it today, designed?
5. This may not be a very easy question. Can you say the name of the Italian who is famous for the violins he made?





JASON AND THE Golden Fleece

To get his revenge on wicked King Pelias, who has stolen the throne of his father, Jason builds himself a great ship, called the Argo, to go in search of the Golden Fleece.

THE splendid ship Argo was ready, with space for fifty oarsmen, and now Jason had to find a gallant crew to go with him on his adventure.

"Call up the heroes of Greece," the Talking Bowsprit had told him.

This Jason did. The news spread far and wide that he needed men of stout hearts—and there were many who were thrilled to get the chance of such an adventure as finding the Golden Fleece. They came flocking to Jason, telling him that they were ready to row the ship to the farthest corners of the world.

"Thank you, my friends," said Jason, welcoming them aboard.

Many were old school-chums of Jason. The mighty Hercules, whose shoulders were strong enough to hold up the sky, was one of them. There were Castor and Pollux, the twin brothers, who had been hatched out of an egg but were not chicken-hearted; Theseus and Lynceus,

with his wonderfully sharp eyes; and Orpheus, who played on a harp so sweetly that wild animals stood on their hind legs and danced merrily to the music.

There was one beautiful young woman among the crew—the lovely Atalanta, who was so light on her feet that she could run faster than most men, and step from one wave-crest to another without getting more than the toe of her sandal wet.

Two others, and very likely to be most useful to Jason, were the two sons of the North Wind, who had wings on their shoulders. In case of calm weather when the sails would not work, they could puff out their cheeks and blow a fine fresh breeze.

Among others making up the crew was a star-gazer named Tiphys, who knew the position of every star in the sky, so Jason wisely made him the helmsman to steer the ship in the right direction. Lynceus, on account of his sharp sight, was made the ship's look-out.

At last everything was ready, and it was time to launch the Argo from the

sloping beach on which it had been built. And it was then that all the careful plans went wrong.

The ship was the biggest that had ever been built in Greece and all the strength of the new crew and Jason put together, could not budge it an inch towards the water. Hercules tried as hard as a dozen men but at that time he had not grown to his full strength, and not even he could make the Argo move. At last, they all sat wearily on the shore, too tired to try again. Some thought that the ship would stay there forever, until it rotted away and fell to pieces.

Seeing the sad faces around him, Jason wondered what to do and suddenly had the thought of asking the advice of the talking figure-head.

"O daughter of the Talking Oak," he said, "how shall we set to work to get our new ship into the water?"

"Take your seats in it," answered the figure-head. "Sit down and take up the oars but hold them upright. Then let Orpheus play on his harp."

At once Jason and his crew leapt eagerly aboard the Argo. Taking up the





Don Lawrence

heavy oars they held them upright, as they had been told.

"Now play your harp, Orpheus," said Jason.

"Willingly, good Jason," smiled Orpheus, who liked the idea of harp-playing much better than rowing. He ran his fingers over the harp-strings and at the first sweet note, they felt the ship move.

Orpheus strummed away and the Argo began to slide down the sloping beach towards the water, as though pushed by unseen hands. As it plunged into the water, the figure-head dipped deep into the foam, then rose again like a swan.

All on board gave a mighty cheer. At last the Argo had been launched! And Orpheus continued to play a lively tune, as the sails were raised to give more speed and the ship sailed bravely towards the open sea.

People on shore also cheered, all except one man—wicked King Pelias. He stood on a rock, scowling at the ship, hating the sight of Jason and his crew sailing so proudly away.

"I never thought that they would even launch such a ship, let alone sail it," he

growled. "But be that as it may, they will never get the Golden Fleece."

When the Argo was fifty miles away from land, Lynceus, the look-out, happened to cast his sharp eyes behind. He reported that he could still see the wicked King Pelias, standing on the rock and scowling so gloomily that he looked like a small black thundercloud.

To make the time pass more pleasantly during the voyage, the heroes aboard the Argo talked about the Golden Fleece. They knew well enough the story of how a brave ram had saved the life of a child, and then had died itself. In memory of this good deed, the fleece of the poor dead ram had been changed into pure gold—and now it hung upon a tree in a sacred grove many miles away. Anyone wishing to reach the Golden Fleece would have to pass through many dangers. But the more they spoke about it, the more eager were Jason and his heroes to face any sort of danger which might come to them.

Next week: They meet the birds with steel-tipped feathers like arrows.

Hallo, Boys and Girls,

If you have read the thrilling story on these two pages you will have learned that Jason was a hero of ancient Greece.

Greece is a sunny land in the Mediterranean (say "Med-it-er-rain-ee-an") Sea and as you grow older you will discover that there are many stories which have been handed down to us from the Greece of Jason's days.

There are so many heroes (which means "brave men") in these stories and so many exciting things were happening that we sometimes call that time in Greece's history "The Golden Age". I think that is a lovely name, do you?

Many people say that because so many new things are being done in the world of today that we are living in a new Golden Age.

How thrilling that is.

Your friend,
The Editor.



Don Lawrence

Don Lawrence

JASON AND THE Golden Fleece

In search of the Golden Fleece, Jason and his Argonauts sailed onwards and met with many marvellous adventures, any one of which could be a story of its own. At one time they landed on an island to collect fresh water. They had done this task and were resting on the beach when they suddenly found themselves attacked by what seemed to be a shower of steel-headed arrows. Some of them stuck into the ground, while others hit against their shields.

"**W**HERE are they coming from?" asked Jason. All fifty of them got up and looked around, searching for an enemy who might be hidden among rocks or bushes at the back of the beach. But they could not see any place where even a single archer could be hidden.

Still, however, the steel-tipped arrows came whizzing among them; and, at last, they looked upward and saw a large flock of evil-looking birds, hovering above them and shooting down their feathers.

These feathers were the steel-tipped arrows which had come whistling down on the Argonauts. Fearing that he and his comrades might be wounded, or even killed, without ever setting eyes on the Golden Fleece, Jason ran to the ship as fast as he could.

"O daughter of the Talking Oak," he said, looking up at the lovely wooden figure-head on the stem of the proud ship, "we need your great wisdom. We are in danger from a flock of birds, which are shooting at us with their steel-pointed feathers. What can we do to drive them away?"

"Make a loud clatter on your shields," said the figure-head. So Jason ran back to his companions, who were still dodging showers of the steel-tipped feathers.

"Strike on your shields with your swords," he ordered.

One or two of them wondered what good it might do, but all began to bang their swords on their shields, making such a terrible clattering din that the birds turned away in sudden fright at the noise. And though they had shot half the feathers out of their wings, they were soon flying away in the far distance like a flock of wild geese.

Having been saved once again by the talking figure-head,



the Argonauts sailed on and at last reached the place called Colchis, where there was the sacred grove of trees in which hung the wonderful Golden Fleece.

When the King of the country heard of their arrival he at once summoned Jason to his palace. The King was stern and cruel-looking, though he managed to put on as polite an expression as he could.

"You are welcome, brave Jason," said the King of Colchis. "Tell me, are you on a pleasure voyage? Or do you hope to discover some unknown lands? What brings you here and gives me the great happiness of seeing you at my court?"

"Great sir," replied Jason. "I have come here for a special reason, and I now beg your Majesty's help. King Pelias, who sits on my father's throne, has agreed to hand it, and his crown, to me if I bring him back the Golden Fleece which hangs here on a sacred tree. I humbly beg that you will allow me to take it away."

The King frowned with anger. He valued the Golden Fleece above all other things and it was not in his mind to allow Jason and his forty-nine brave Greek warriors to walk away with his most precious treasure.

"Do you know," asked the King, "what you must do before you can get within reach of the Golden Fleece?"

"Yes," answered Jason. "I have been told that a monster dragon lies beneath the sacred tree and that it has never failed to swallow in one mouthful anyone who dares to go near."

"That is true, young man," smiled the King. "But that is not all. There are other things to be done before you can even get near the fearsome dragon. For example, you must first tame two huge fire-breathing bulls. They breathe such hot fire out of their noses and mouths that nobody has ever gone within three yards

of them without being burnt to a small black cinder. What do you think of that, brave Jason?"

"I must face that danger when I come to it, good sir," said Jason.

"After taming the fiery bulls," went on the King, trying to frighten Jason as much as possible, "you must yoke them to a plough, and must plough a field of sacred earth. Then, in the furrows you must plant dragon's teeth, which will at once grow into armed soldiers in their hundreds. They will leap out of the furrows and attack you with all their might. You and your forty-nine Argonauts, my good Jason, will never be able to stand up against them for a moment!"

Jason thought over the problem for a while, then said: "We shall see, noble sir, when we come face to face with all these dangers you tell us about."

The King muttered angrily to himself. "What a foolish and vain young man he is," he thought. "We shall soon see what my fire-eating bulls will do for him."

"Very well, bold Jason," he said aloud, as pleasantly as he could. "I bid you make yourself welcome in my palace for today. And be sure to get plenty of good food and sleep, for tomorrow morning you shall try your skill at taming the bulls."

While the King talked with Jason, a lovely young woman was standing behind the throne. She kept her eyes fixed on the young stranger and listened to every word that was spoken. When Jason bowed to the King and left the room, this young woman followed him.

Although Jason had directed all his words to the king he had not failed to notice the dark-haired girl who had been standing behind the throne.

Despite all the terrible dangers which he must face the following day, as Jason walked from the room his thoughts were

upon the girl and her beautiful features.

Then, without turning his head, he sensed that the girl had followed him. He paused and turned to face her, wondering whether in her he had a new enemy to worry about.

"Who are you?" he asked her. "And why have you followed me? Is there something you want of me?"

"I am the King's daughter," she said to Jason. "If you will trust me, I will tell you how to tame the fiery bulls, and sow the dragon's teeth, and get the Golden Fleece."

"Sweet princess, if you will do this for me, I promise to be grateful to you my whole life long," said Jason. "But how can you help me? Are you really an enchantress with powers of magic?"

"My name is Medea, good Jason," was the reply, "and I do indeed have certain powers of magic. I know some of your own secrets already—how you carried an old woman on your back across a raging river, and how you carved a speaking figure-head for your ship from a branch of the famous Talking Oak. I admire you for your courage, Jason, and I shall see that no harm comes to you tomorrow."

Next week: Jason faces the fiery bulls.

Here are the questions about the memory test on page 9. See if you can answer them. You can re-read the story to see if you have answered them correctly.

1. What was Thomas Telford's father?
2. What did everybody call Thomas?
3. What did Thomas first think he would be?
4. How many new bridges did he build in Scotland?
5. What was the name of the famous canal that Thomas Telford built?





JOE LAWRENCE

JASON AND THE *Golden Fleece*

JASON, the brave young prince of Greece, had been set three tasks to do before he could ever hope to reach the Golden Fleece. The first task was to tame two great fire-breathing bulls, which could shrivel a man to a burnt cinder with one puff of their flaming breath. The second was to yoke the bulls to a plough and cut furrows into the earth, into which he had to sow a basketful of dragon's teeth. The third task was to fight against a regiment of armed warriors, who would grow suddenly out of the ground wherever the dragon's teeth were sown.

There was really a fourth danger to be overcome at the sacred tree where the precious Golden Fleece hung upon a branch, but Jason did not have any fear of it.

"I am not worried about the dragon that guards the sacred tree," he told Medea, the daughter of the King of Colchis. "I know how to deal with such monsters. But, alas, I do not know how to manage the fire-breathing bulls."

"Do not be afraid of them, Jason," said Princess Medea. "I have a magic ointment, which will stop you from being burned up, and cure you if you chance to be a little scorched."

She put a golden box into his hand, told him to rub the powerful ointment on himself, and to meet her again at midnight.

"Be brave," she added, "and before the break of day, the fiery bulls shall be tamed."

So at midnight, after he had rubbed the magic ointment on himself, Jason met Medea on the marble steps of the King's palace. She gave him a basketful of dragon's teeth, then led him through the quiet streets of the city, into the field where the two bulls were kept.

"There they are, good Jason," said the beautiful young princess. "They are lying in that far corner over there."

Jason let go of Medea's hand and walked boldly forward in the direction she had indicated. At some distance from the bulls, he became aware of four streams of flame, which rose up, then died down and rose up again. These were, of course, caused by the breathing of the bulls as they slept.

As Jason walked nearer, the four fiery streams became stronger. The two bulls had heard his footsteps and were lifting their hot noses to sniff the air. He went a little nearer still, and then each of the bulls made a terrible roaring sound. They jumped to their feet and sheets of flame came flaring out of their nostrils towards Jason.

Their breath scorched the grass in an instant and turned the ground into black powder. But as for Jason himself, the red flames curled round his body without doing him the slightest harm, or even giving him the smallest of burns—thanks to the magic ointment given to him by Medea.

"The flames don't hurt me," he said, in some surprise and relief.

He was ready for the bulls when they came charging at him. Just as the brutes thought themselves sure that they could toss him into the air, Jason caught one of them by the horn and the other by the tail and held them both in a tight grip. In this manner he gripped them and both the bulls were at once tamed. Being enchanted creatures, their magic spells had been broken by the way brave Jason had handled them.

It was now easy for him to yoke the bulls to a plough and drive them over the black earth, cutting it into long furrows.

When this was done, Jason scattered the dragon's teeth into the furrows, covered them over with soil and then stood on the edge of the field, anxious to see what would happen next.

"How long do we have to wait for harvest time?" he asked Medea, who was now standing beside him.

"Not long, I think," said Medea. "But, of course, I do not know exactly, because nobody has ever succeeded in taming the bulls and sown the dragon's teeth before. However, I have been told many times by my father that when dragon's teeth are sown in the ground, a crop of armed men never fails to spring up from the furrows."

She and Jason waited. The moon was now full in the night sky and in the light of its silver rays they could see the black furrows quite clearly.

"How long do we have to wait?" asked Jason again.

As if in answer, several bright spots appeared on the ground. They glistened in the moonbeams, like sparkling drops of dew. Then there were more, and more, and more, until the whole ploughed field was dotted with shining points of light.

At first Jason could not make out what they were, but as he looked closer, and the points of light got bigger, he drew in a deep breath of surprise.

"Armed men—starting to sprout from the ground!" he gasped. "Those shining points that I can see are the steel tips of their spears!"

The spears, shooting straight up from

the earth, grew longer—and then Jason could see that men's shining helmets were beginning to appear also.

The helmets grew farther and farther out of the ground and beneath them could be seen the faces of the armed warriors themselves—strong bearded faces, looking fierce and angry.

In a moment or two, the warriors were out of the ground up to their waists. Each wore a bright breastplate, and in every right hand there was a sword or a spear, and on each left arm a shield.

It took them only a few seconds more to step right out of the ground—and there they were, an army ready for battle. But who were they to fight?

For a while they seemed puzzled. They banged their swords and spears against their shields and looked at one another fiercely.

Then one of them began to shout: "Show us the enemy! Where is the enemy we have been sent out of the ground to fight?"

All took up the same cry. "Show us the enemy! Show us the enemy!" And, of course, it was not long before those in the front line of warriors spotted Jason.

He had drawn his sword and it flashed in the moonlight, catching their eyes.

In a moment all the warriors turned towards Jason and charged with all their might.

"Guard the Golden Fleece!" they were shouting. "Here is the enemy—but he will never take the Golden Fleece!"

How can Jason save himself? More of this wonderful story next week.





JASON AND THE *Golden Fleece*

BRAVE and fearless though he was, Jason had a sinking feeling inside him as the horde of armed warriors, who had sprung up from the dragon's teeth sown in the ground, came rushing at him. "Guard the Golden Fleece!" they were shouting. "Protect it from all enemies!"

"I am only one against so many," said Jason, "but I shall fight as best as I can."

Medea, the King's daughter, was close at hand to help him, however. "There is no need to fight, Jason," she whispered. "They can be beaten with a little cunning. Snatch up a stone from the ground. Do as I say—quickly!"

Jason picked up a big, round pebble, wondering what to do with it.

"Throw it among them," said Medea. "It is the only way to save yourself."

The armed warriors were now very close when Jason threw the stone. It flew from his hand, struck the steel helmet of the leading soldier, bounced off on to the nose of the man next to him, then bounced once again into the angry face of another, hitting him between the eyes.

Each of the three thought that one of the others had thrown the stone which struck them and, instead of running towards Jason, they began to fight among themselves.

Others, being jostled and pushed, also took up the battle. In a moment the entire army of warriors was raging and roaring and attacking each other with all the fury they could raise.

One by one they fell to the ground. At last there was only one left standing, but he had been so wounded that he also fell down dead. And that was the end of the army that had sprouted from the dragon's teeth.

Unharmed and still a little bewildered, Jason turned to Medea and thanked her.

"To give you help was my pleasure, Jason," she replied. "Your night's work has been well done. Tomorrow, you can tell the King that you have completed the tasks he set you to do."

Next morning, Jason went to the palace of the King, Medea's father.

"May it please your Majesty," he said. "The fiery bulls have been tamed and yoked, the field has been ploughed and sown with dragon's teeth, the crop of armed warriors has sprung up, but now not a single one of them is still alive. Will you keep your promise? May I take down the Golden Fleece from the sacred tree and depart with my forty-nine comrades?"

The King scowled and looked very angry.

"I made that promise, not knowing that you would get magic help from my daughter," he said. "I now feel that I can break it, so I forbid you to make any more attempts to get the Golden Fleece."

Sadly, Jason left the palace. He felt like calling up his brave comrades to make a bid to defeat the dragon that lived at the foot of the sacred tree and snatch the precious Golden Fleece. But he could not be sure that the ever-hungry dragon would not swallow them all in fifty mouthfuls.

He was hurrying down the palace steps when Medea came up to him.

"What says my father, the King?" asked the Princess.

"He has broken his promise and refuses to give me the Golden Fleece," replied Jason.

"He is angry because he never expected you to perform all the dangerous tasks he set," nodded Medea. "Others have tried before you, but they have never been able to get past the fire-breathing bulls, let alone yoke them to a plough and sow the dragon's teeth."

"Nor could I have done it without your help, Medea," admitted Jason. "I can never thank you enough, but now my disappointment is so great that I feel angry, too. It has been a long journey for us to reach the land of the Golden Fleece and my brave comrades aboard the Argo will not be happy to return without the prize they came for. As for me, if I fail to get the Golden Fleece, then I will fail to get the throne that wicked King Pelias stole from my father."

"Then I must help you again, so that you can take it," said Medea. "Wait for me here, an hour before midnight."

At the appointed time, when all was

dark and quiet, Princess Medea led Prince Jason through the streets of the city. They walked in silence across the pasture land where the two tamed bulls contentedly lay down, mooing gently as they chewed the cud. Then on across the ploughed field they went, into a deep dark forest, packed with giant oak trees. When they were in the middle of it, Medea squeezed Jason's hand.

She pointed to a patch of gleaming light a little farther on, about a man's height from the ground.

"Look! There it is, Jason," she said. "The Golden Fleece!"

Next week: Jason meets the mighty dragon.





JASON AND THE *Golden Fleece*

JASON stood at last in the sacred forest, hardly able to believe what he saw. Fifty feet away from him stood a great oak tree and upon one of its branches hung an object which shimmered like the purest gold.

"The Golden Fleece!" said Jason, in little more than a whisper, being so thrilled by the sight of it that he could hardly speak. "How wonderfully it shines, as though dipped in a golden sunset."

He started to move towards it, but Medea, the King's daughter, touched his arm.

"Wait," she warned him. "Have you so soon forgotten what guards it?"

To tell the truth, Jason HAD forgotten for the moment, but he was soon reminded of the danger of stepping forward to take the Golden Fleece, when the huge head of a terrible dragon suddenly shot forward from the base of the tree and opened its great jaws.

with a roar that set the whole forest shaking.

The dragon seemed to know that some other living creature was within reach. Though most of its body was wrapped around the sacred oak, it stretched out a long neck and twisted its ugly head in all directions.

"Hold back, Jason," said Medea, grasping his arm even tighter. "The dragon would eat you in a split second if you tried to fight it. In this gold box I have a magic potion, which will deal with the dragon far easier than your sword."

The dragon had heard her voice, for as swift as lightning, its huge head came shooting towards them, stretching out to a distance of forty feet or more. As it approached, Medea tossed the contents of the gold box right down the monster's wide-open throat.

At once the dragon reared up, twisting its body and tail from around the trunk of the oak tree. Shattered branches clattered down, and then the monster dropped full length to the ground and lay still.

"It is only a sleeping potion," said Medea to Jason. "I had no wish to kill it outright, for it was only doing its duty, guarding the Golden Fleece. Be quick now and take it!"

With trembling fingers, Jason snatched the precious fleece and hurried away through the sacred forest. As he went into the deep shadows of the trees, his way was lit by the golden glow of the precious object.

Bursting clear of the trees, he looked up and saw two of the Argo's crew. They were the two winged sons of the North Wind, who could fly like birds in the sky.

"Tell the others!" Jason shouted to them, holding up the Golden Fleece for them to see. "Tell them to get the

ship ready for sailing as soon as possible."

"They are already waiting for you, Jason," replied the sons of the North Wind.

It was true. Lynceus, the look-out of the Argo, who had the keenest eyes of anyone in the world, had caught a glimpse of Jason bringing back the Golden Fleece, although as much as fourteen miles separated the ship from the sacred grove of trees.

At his bidding, the rest of the Argonauts had taken their places, with their oars held ready in their hands.

"Goodbye, Medea," said Jason to the King's daughter. "Without your help I could never have won this golden prize. How can I ever thank you enough?"

"I shall be happy enough when the wicked King Pelias has to give up the throne he took from your father," Medea replied. "When you put on the crown, Jason, you will be a worthy ruler in his place, and the people of the Kingdom will be all the better for it. Goodbye now, Jason."

Medea turned and hurried away. Jason raced on towards the sea and when at last he came within sight of the Argo he heard the voice of the Talking Figure-head calling to him.

"Make haste, Jason—make haste," she said.

Jason ran and jumped aboard. He proudly held up the Golden Fleece, and at the sight of it the crew gave a great shout of joy. Their oars pulled at the water and with Orpheus playing on his harp, they began to sing a song of triumph, as the ship sped homewards into the rays of the rising sun.

Jason's adventure was over. After facing so many dangers, the Golden Fleece was his.

The End



